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Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 194519

EXDIS

CINCPAC HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOLL REPEAT BANGKOK 15264 ACTION SECSTATE INFO VIENTIANE
SEPTEMBER 28 QUOTE

E C R E T BANGKOK 15264

DEPARTMENT PASS CINCPAC

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, LA
SUBJ: PRESS HANDLING OF REDEPLOYMENT OF THAI VOLUNTEER UNITS
IN LAOS

REF: A. BANGKOK 14306; B. VIENTIANE 6445; C. BANGKOK 14851.

1. WE ARE SYMPATHETIC TO VIENTIANE'S COMMENTS
(REF B) AND OF COURSE ACCEPT VIENTIANE'S JUDGMENT ON
WHAT RLG WOULD BE WILLING TO SAY REGARDING THAI VOL-
UNTEER UNITS. WE FACE A DIFFERENT PROBLEM HERE AND
WANT TO AVOID A "SECRECY ISSUE" WITH THE PRESS AND
CONGRESS WHICH WOULD DAMAGE US-THAI RELATIONS. WE
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BELIEVE OUR ASSUMPTIONS IN REF A REGARDING PRESS
INTEREST IN THIS PROGRAM ARE VALID AND THAT WE SHOULD
NOT ATTEMPT TO CONCEAL OR DENY THE FACT THAT WE ARE
FUNDING THE THAI VOLUNTEERS BEFORE AND AFTER THEIR RE-

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DEPLOYMENT TO THAILAND, IF ASKED BY NEWSMEN.

2. PRIME MINISTER THANOM'S SEPTEMBER 19 PRESS CONFERENCE (REF C) REAFFIRMS THE THAI SENSITIVITY REGARDING THE VOLUNTEERS. THEREFORE, WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT THAT THE USG WORK OUT AN AGREED POSITION AND CONSULT EARLY WITH RTG RE HANDLING PRESS QUESTIONS ON THIS TOPIC.

3. REGARDING PARA 3 REF B. WE COULD LIVE WITH NOT MAKING AN OFFICIAL PUBLIC STATEMENT. WE AGREE ALSO THAT NO ONE SHOULD PUBLICLY REFER TO WITHDRAWAL OF "FOREIGN TROOPS" OR DESCRIBE THE THAI VOLUNTEERS IN SUCH A MANNER. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT THAT WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT ON QUESTION AND ANSWERS WHICH WOULD BE USED TO ANSWER QUERIES IN WASHINGTON.

4. Q'S AND A'S IN REF A PARA 5 STILL APPEAR VALID AND APPROPRIATE EXCEPT Q 2.A. WHICH SHOULD BE CHANGED TO QUOTE THEY WILL BE LOCATED IN TRAINING CAMPS. UNQUOTE. CURRENT PLANS CALL FOR PLACING THE RETURNING VOLUNTEER UNITS IN THEIR FORMER TRAINING CAMPS AND NOT DEPLOYING THEM ALONG THE BORDER.

5. REF B PARA 1(B) RAISES A DILEMMA. ADMITTEDLY THE VOLUNTEERS IN LAOS WERE DESCRIBED TO CONGRESS AS "LOCAL FORCES IN LAOS." HOWEVER, WHEN THESE UNITS MOVE BACK TO THAILAND, THEY WOULD BECOME THIRD COUNTRY FORCES IN THAILAND IF WE PERSIST WITH THE "LOCAL FORCES IN LAOS" ARGUMENT. A POSSIBLE APPROACH WOULD BE TO REFER TO THEIR STATUS AS "TRAINING IN THAILAND" SIMILAR TO THEIR STATUS PRIOR TO THEIR DEPLOYMENT INTO LAOS.

6. ACTION REQUIRED: WASHINGTON'S GUIDANCE IS REQUESTED. WHILE WE ARE NOT PRESSING FOR AN OFFICIAL PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT, WE HOPE WE CAN AGREE ON HANDLING PRESS QUERIES AND WISH TO ADVISE RTG OF OUR

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RESPONSES IN ADVANCE.
MASTERF

UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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